

express or implied, before the exercise of suffrage in the election of statesmen. This idea is adopted and confirmed by our form of government, wherein a test of affection is wisely required previous to admission to office; and the right of suffrage, by the fifth article of the bill of rights, is expressly declared to be due to those only who have attachment to the community—meaning, when applied to us, the government then established. If the general principle rests upon such weighty authority, and is perfectly agreeable to reasons which are too obvious to need enumeration, are there any particular circumstances in the present case, which would warrant a departure from a caution so generally approved? We apprehend not; but, on the contrary, that our circumstances render it peculiarly improper and impolitic, at this time, to restore the disaffected to the privilege of electing and being elected into offices of profit and trust. That we are in peace is true, that our government is safely and permanently established we sincerely hope, but you will be pleased to remember, that the late treaty of peace is not fully executed by the court of Britain; the western posts are not given up to the United States; there are many subjects of discussion between the two countries; that from late authentic accounts, vessels of war upon the Lakes are put in commission by the officers of the king of Britain, and the province of Canada strengthened by a considerable military force; that the public acts of the British government breathe rather an hostile than a friendly disposition towards this country; that from the best and latest accounts, the British nation bear with impatient chagrin their loss of America, and have not relinquished their intention of doing us mischief. We know the situation of the American government. Should our best and most illustrious ally be drawn to take part in the war which it is thought has already commenced, or will soon break out, in Europe, and the British government embrace the opportunity of trying once more their favourite scheme of subjugating America, no wise or honest politician would wish our safety in the smallest degree dependent on those who have been uniformly opposed to the principles upon which the governments of this country have been supported and must be defended. And though it may be said, that the objects of your bill will probably be but a small minority of any public body in the state, and therefore not dangerous, it may justly be answered, that a minority in times of difficulty frequently have it in their power to succeed, by embarrassing and perplexing, when they cannot prevail by a candid avowal of their principles and an open pursuit of their object; and let those who treat the apprehensions of danger from admitting the nonjurors to a full participation of power and privileges, as vain and chimerical, remember, to the influence of how few disaffected men in America this country was more than once brought to the brink of ruin in the late revolution. The smallest court, the least danger, is sufficient to prevent those who wish to preserve not only the form but the substance of our government, from admitting to such important privileges, men who have no just claim to them, and who must receive them as acts of grace whenever they are conferred. We can see no benefit at present to be derived to the prosperity of the state, from adopting ideas which you are pleased to call *humane*; but apprehending circumstances may take place, in which the pernicious effects of your ill-judged tenderness would soon appear, we cannot coincide with you in the proposed display of liberality. There are at present many applications by British subjects to have compensation made them for confiscated property, and some of our citizens, who have suffered by the depredations of the enemy, have prayed the legislature to be indemnified. Introducing the disaffected at this time, would be a circumstance extremely favourable to the first, and probably injurious to the last class of applicants, or at least apprehensions might be entertained by our constituents, that vows to these or other subjects had their influence in the adoption of so extraordinary and unexpected a measure. We lament exceedingly, that prudence and policy require that a discrimination should remain, which is thought to be degrading; but it must be known, that this distinction is the effect of choice, made by the disaffected, after the most indulgent treatment and repeated calls to unite with their countrymen, after time for consideration, and when the designs of Britain to reduce this country to absolute slavery were openly avowed and known both to our friends and enemies; and while you are pouring oil upon the disturbed minds of the nonjurors, we beg you to have some tenderness to the feelings of the whigs of this state, for if the distinction is odious to the former, we believe the indiscriminate association would be equally disagreeable to the latter; and if we should at this time put those who have and those who have not deserved well of their country, in equal rank as to the enjoyment of all privileges, the citizens now and hereafter will be taught this lesson by the acts of government, that no particular advantage is to be gained or lost by a performance or neglect of duty; and thus one of the strongest motives of human actions will be taken from the scale, which every good and wise politician must wish should preponderate. We are not to learn from your information, that a right in the people to participate in the legislature is the basis of free government; but the exercise of this right in all well regulated societies is confined to those who are attached to the constitution; it is expressly so by our bill of rights; but your bill, instead of pursuing, opposes this principle, by giving those who have not attachment equal privileges with those who are well affected. If there is to be a departure from the bill of rights by enlarging the privilege of suffrage, there is a class of men who certainly have a preferable claim on our generosity to that of the nonjurors; we mean, those of the citizens who have not property to the amount of thirty pounds, among whom are many soldiers, to whose services we in a great measure are indebted for our present peace and independence. We are of opinion, that the act proposed to be repealed by your bill, so far as it prevents those who refused to avow their attachment to our government from a participation in the full enjoyment of its privileges, cannot be considered as too high an exercise of legislative power, nor can it be viewed